

# BLUE GRASS BLADE

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DEVOTED TO THE PROPAGANDA OF FREEDOM OF THOUGHT

A. T. Parker  
High and Ashland East Side  
Sep 29

## Solitude

(Ella Wheeler Wilcox.)

Laugh, and the world laughs with you;  
Weep, and you weep alone;  
For this sad old earth must borrow its mirth—  
It has troubles enough of its own.  
Sing, and the hills will answer;  
Sigh, and it's lost on the air.  
The echoes rebound to joyful sound,  
But shrink from voicing care.

Rejoice, and men will seek you;  
Grieve, and they turn and go;  
They want full measure of all your pleasure,  
But they do not want your woe.  
Be glad, and your friends are many;  
Be sad, and you lose them all.  
There are none to decline your nectared wine,  
But alone you must drink the gall.

Feast, and your halls are crowded;  
Fast, and the world goes by.  
Succeed and give, and it helps you to live;  
But no man can help you die.  
There is room in the halls of pleasure  
For a large and lordly train,  
But one by one we must all file on  
Through the narrow aisle of pain.

# BASIC LAW AND PRINCIPLES OF NEW ORGANIZATION

## Platform Adopted by the St. Louis Convention Upon Which all Elements of Freethought Can Co-operate for an Effective Propaganda

### CONSTITUTION.

#### NAME.

##### Article 1.

Sec. 1.—The name of this organization shall be: "THE RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA."

Sec. 2.—The headquarters and the principal offices of this organization shall be kept and maintained at such places as the Board of Directors may determine as being the most necessary and expedient for the proper transaction of its business.

#### OFFICERS.

##### Article 2.

Sec. 1.—The active, elective officers of this organization shall be a President, a first Vice-President, a second Vice-President, a Secretary, and a Treasurer.

Sec. 2.—The officers named in the preceding section of this article shall be, and they are hereby, constituted a Board of Directors, which said Board shall manage, control and direct the business affairs of the organization when the organization is not in convention.

Sec. 3.—There shall be a list of honorary vice-Presidents to be elected by the organization in convention at the ratio of one honorary vice-President to each separate state and territory of the United States.

Sec. 4.—All active elective officers named in Section 1 of this article shall be elected by ballot, by the organization in convention, and all honorary vice-Presidents as named in Section 3 of this article shall be elected by viva-voce vote in convention, and each and all of said officers, active and honorary, shall hold their respective offices for a term of one year and until their successors are elected and installed.

#### MEMBERSHIP.

##### Article 3.

Sec. 1.—All persons who are in full accord with the principles of this organization and who are willing to aid in its propaganda, are eligible to membership.

Sec. 2.—Applications for membership herein must be made to the Secretary in writing, signed by the applicant, giving full name and postoffice address, and the application must be accom-

panied with the full amount of the annual membership dues.

Sec. 3.—Upon being admitted to membership each member of this organization shall be entitled to, and shall receive, a printed certificate of his or her membership, duly signed by the President and Secretary and sealed with an imprint of the seal of this organization.

Sec. 4.—Each and every member of this organization shall be required to pay to the Treasurer hereof a sum of not less than Two Dollars per annum as membership dues.

Sec. 5.—All annual membership dues, as provided herein, shall become due and payable on the First Day of January in each and every year, and any such dues that are unpaid at the date of the next succeeding annual convention shall be deemed delinquent. Any member may make donations of money, books, pamphlets, and other literature for distribution and propaganda, and members making such donations of money, books or literature, in excess of the amount of the annual membership dues shall not be required to pay any further dues, but said dues shall be considered as fully paid for a period of one year.

Sec. 6.—Duly accredited delegates, or representatives, of any existing municipal, state, or national society, that is of a distinctive and admitted Freethought character, having proper credentials from their respective societies, shall be given a voice and vote touching all matters properly brought before the conventions of this organization, upon the payment by each of such delegates or representatives of one year's dues as herein provided.

#### ANNUAL CONVENTION.

##### Article 4.

Sec. 1.—There shall be held once in each and every year a meeting or convention of this organization for the transaction of the business of the organization, and such other matters pertinent thereto, as may be properly brought before such conventions. The conventions shall be migratory and the time and place of holding the same shall be determined by the Board of Directors.

Sec. 2.—In their determination of the time and place of holding each annual convention of this organization, the Board of Directors shall be guided by suitability of location, the convenience of its members, and such other matters as may inure to the best interests of the organization.

Sec. 3.—The Board of Directors, through the President and Secretary, shall publish, or furnish to be published, in all Free-



thought journals in this country, sixty days in advance of any annual convention, the time and place of holding the same, and shall give such other and further information, through said journals, from time to time, concerning the same, as shall inure to the best interests of the organization and its members.

#### DUTIES OF OFFICERS.

##### Article 5.

Sec. 1.—PRESIDENT.—The duties of the President of this organization shall be to preside over, direct, manage and control the annual conventions hereof; he shall direct, manage and control, with the advice and consent of the Board of Directors, all the propaganda work of the organization; he shall be chairman, ex-officio, of the Board of Directors; he shall have full power and authority to call the meetings of the said Board of Directors at such times and in such places as he shall deem to be the most convenient and expedient to the business interests thereof; he shall have one vote on all matters coming before the Board of Directors, and in addition thereto, he shall have a casting-vote in case of a tie; he shall appoint, supervise, and direct, with the advice and consent of the Board of Directors, all of the authorized lecturers of this organization, and he shall direct and supervise the proper distribution of all literature and all propaganda work that may or shall be done in the name and under the auspices of this organization; he shall be the custodian of the seal of this organization; he shall sign all certificates of membership and affix the imprint of the seal of the organization thereto; he shall sign all warrants or orders upon the Treasurer before the same shall be paid, and then only after the same have been approved by the Board of Directors; he shall from time to time submit to the Board of Directors, for their consideration, or to the convention, as the case may be, and as emergencies may demand, such plans and suggestions for a successful propaganda as to him may appear to be both necessary and expedient; he shall keep a faithful record of all the business transactions of his office, and shall make report thereon, in writing, to the next annual convention; he shall perform such other and further duties as may properly pertain to the office of President, or that may be required of him by the convention or the Board of Directors.

Sec. 2.—FIRST VICE-PRESIDENT.—The duties of the First Vice-President shall be to perform the duties of the President, in his absence, sickness, or incapacity. He shall also render such assistance as he is able, to the proper and effective work of the organization. He shall be a member of the Board of Directors.

Sec. 3.—SECOND VICE-PRESIDENT.—The duties of the Second Vice-President shall be to perform the duties of President in the absence, sickness, or incapacity of both the President and the First Vice-President. He shall render such assistance as he is able to the proper and effective work of this organization. He shall be a member of the Board of Directors.

Sec. 4.—SECRETARY.—The duties of the Secretary shall be to keep a correct and faithful record of all the business transactions of the organization in annual convention, or other meeting, in a book provided for that purpose; he shall keep and maintain a correct list of all the names and postoffice addresses of the officers and members of this organization in a book provided for that purpose; he shall sign all certificates of membership, after the same have been signed and sealed by the President, and shall thereupon send the same, by mail, to the member whose name appears therein; he shall promptly and efficiently attend to all the correspondence from members and other business mat-

ters of the organization emanating from members or that may be submitted to him by the President or other officer or by the Board of Directors; he shall be a member of the Board of Directors, and Secretary thereof, ex-officio; he shall keep a faithful record of all the business transactions of the Board of Directors in a book provided for that purpose; he shall keep a roster of all the names and postoffice addresses of the authorized and commissioned lecturers of this organization; he shall keep a roster of all municipal, state or national societies and organizations that shall affiliate with this organization for propaganda or other purposes; he shall ascertain and record the names and locations of all cities or towns wherein a lecturer or debater can be used to advantage in the propaganda work of this organization and shall endeavor to keep all such localities in touch with the organization for purposes of propaganda; he shall be custodian of the books, pamphlets, and all the literature of the organization for purposes of distribution, and shall distribute the same under the direction of the President or the Board of Directors, either or both; he shall countersign all orders or warrants on the Treasurer, after the same have been signed by the President and approved by the Board of Directors; he shall, by and with the advice and consent of the President and Board of Directors, grant and issue such charters as may be authorized to municipal or state organizations that may or shall be organized by this organization or under its auspices; he shall make out a monthly statement of the business transactions of his office and shall submit the same to the President, which said statement shall be for publication and shall contain and show all important and necessary information concerning the propaganda work of the organization; he shall prepare and submit, in writing, to the annual convention of the organization, an itemized report showing all the business transactions and records of his office during the preceding year; he shall receive such salary or compensation as may be fixed by the Board of Directors.

Sec. 5.—TREASURER.—The duties of the Treasurer shall be to receive, collect, receipt for, and safely keep all the moneys and funds belonging or owned by this organization; he shall divide and separate the annual membership contributions, unless the latter be specifically donated for a certain purpose, into two funds, to be known as the "General Fund" and the "Propaganda Fund",—one dollar of said membership dues going into each fund; he shall keep both of said funds separate and apart each from the other; he shall pay all orders or warrants made upon him, after the same have been signed by the President and Secretary and approved by the Board of Directors, out of the proper fund as the said orders or warrants may call for; he shall keep a faithful record of all funds or moneys received by him, showing by whom and from what source the same has been paid and the fund to which it has been applied, in a book to be provided for that purpose; he shall at the end of each and every month make out and submit to the President, in writing, a statement showing the total amount of money received by him during the preceding month, by whom and how the same was paid, the fund to which it was applied, the amount of money paid out by him during the said month and the purposes for which the same was paid and the fund from which it was drawn; also the amount of money on hand in each of said funds; he shall from time to time as the President or Board of Directors may request, furnish him or them with a statement showing the actual condition of the treasury; he shall make out an itemized statement, in writing, of the total receipts, disbursements, and the business transactions of his office during the year, and shall submit the same to the annual convention of this organization; he shall be a member of the Board of Directors.

Sec. 6.—BOARD OF DIRECTORS.—The duties of the Board

of Directors shall be to meet in executive session subject to the call of the President in writing, at such times and in such places as the President may deem most expedient and convenient; the Board of Directors shall be entitled to at least fourteen days notice of the time and place of such meetings; the President shall also call a meeting of said Board at any time upon the written request of said Board, signed by any three members; the Board of Directors shall have charge of the propaganda work of the organization, and shall, by majority vote, be empowered and authorized to determine upon and adopt such rules and regulations for the appointment of authorized and commissioned lecturers as shall by them be deemed necessary to subserve the best interests of the organization; they shall pass upon and approve all claims, bills and accounts against the treasury of the organization before the same shall be paid; they shall by majority vote determine and approve methods of propaganda, the number, personality and character of public lecturers that shall or may be commissioned by the organization; they shall by majority vote determine the compensation to be paid to such authorized or commissioned lecturers and the mode and manner of creating the fund, or increasing it, for that purpose; they shall by majority vote prescribe and designate the number and character of books, pamphlets or other literature to be distributed by the organization as provided; they shall be empowered and authorized to secure and employ such literary assistance as the funds of the organization will permit for the creation and publication of such new or other literature to be distributed by the organization, and the manner and method of its distribution; they shall authorize the institution of municipal, state or other associations to be affiliated with this organization, the same to be duly chartered, as may be shown to said Board to be necessary, proper and expedient, or best calculated to subserve the best interests of the organization and its propaganda; they shall at all times render such assistance as is within their power to the officers of this organization in the proper and effective discharge of their several duties; they shall have the right to call for and examine any or all of the books of the officers of this organization, provided that a sufficient and reasonable notice be given therefor to the officer having the custody of said book or books; they shall do and perform such other and further acts and things, pertaining to their office, as may be pertinent to and subserving the best interests of the organization and consistent with its constitution and by-laws.

Sec. 7.—HONORARY VICE-PRESIDENTS.—The duties of the Honorary Vice-Presidents of this organization shall be to keep and maintain as close a supervision as possible of the propaganda work in their respective States or Territories, informing the President from time to time if any opportunity exists therein for the dissemination of its principles; they shall strive to increase the membership of this organization in their respective States and Territories, aid in the distribution of its literature, and at all times do what they can to subserve the best interests of the organization and its propaganda.

#### DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES.

1. This Association regards it as an inherent right common to all humanity to alter, change and modify any and all forms of religious beliefs or disbeliefs as the light of knowledge and the force of the highest human reason shall proclaim that such change, alteration or modification are necessary to the welfare and happiness of the race.

2. This Association regards the inculcation and dissemination of high moral precepts as of greater worth and of more practical utility to mankind than the professions of religious beliefs.

3. This Association regards all true morality as wholly dependent upon human considerations and in effect and practice implies

the greatest possible happiness to the greatest possible numbers without regard to religious beliefs or disbeliefs.

4. This Association regards that the promulgation of scientific truth should be the constant aim of humanity.

#### CONSTRUCTIVE PHILOSOPHY.

The practical working basis of this organization shall be to teach and promulgate by processes of education the following elements of constructive philosophy:

1. The philosophy of Monism as setting forth a pure conception of the universe based upon natural science, human reason and human experience.

2. The unity of Nature as affirming that all living organisms are subject to the same established laws of existence and development.

3. The inculcation of the accumulated mental and moral concepts gained from human reason and experience, declining to acquiesce in the mystical conception of a personal creator.

4. The accepted demonstrations of modern science which prove that the Cosmos is regulated and governed by uncreated and indestructible natural processes commonly termed natural law.

5. The general disbelief in the existence of a personal first cause or ruler over nature, substituting therefor the doctrine that the universe is self-governed and eternal.

#### PROPAGANDA.

As a means to effectively and intelligently carry out and promulgate the basic principles and the elements of constructive philosophy of this organization, its propaganda work shall consist of public lectures, public debates, public discussions, both on the platform and in the press, and in the widest possible distribution of such literature as shall embody and set forth the same. This propaganda shall be two-fold:

First—As an exponent of the Philosophy of Monism as being best adapted to subserve the best and highest interests of humanity, and the up-building of human society by teaching the true relations of man to the universe and to each other.

Second—By processes of education to overcome the aggressions of the church, and its advocates, and to enable the Liberal thinkers of the nations to effectively resist the same by a concerted plan of action.

#### SYSTEMATIC PROPAGANDA.

The systematic propaganda of this organization as inculcative of its general principles shall include the following:

1. The proper extension of that degree of culture and refinement which have raised man above the other animals and given him dominion over the earth, basing them upon a rational co-operation of the race for further improvement.

2. The rational organization of human governments through the secular power based on justice and natural law, and not upon the worn-out traditions of superstition.

3. The most strenuous opposition to the theological hierarchy which invests worldly power with the cloak of religion and exploits the credulity of the people for its personal gain.

4. The intelligent promulgation of the Monistic Philosophy as embracing the ideals of truth, virtue and beauty, and to demand equal rights with so-called religious organizations therefor from the state and from society.

5. Such necessary reform in our system of public education as will substitute instruction in the different branches of natural science for theological fiction, with a view of imparting correct information upon the origin and development of life upon the globe.



6. The complete and absolute divorcement of church and state and the abrogation of clerical influence or interference in all matters of education, and legislation, of a public character.

7. The assisting and encouraging of all individual members of this society, and all other Freethinkers, in the establishment of local societies for the promulgation of these principles, keeping them in touch with duly qualified and commissioned lecturers and supplying them with propagandic literature for distribution as the funds of this organization will permit.

8. It shall also be the duty and privilege of this organization to protect the civil and public rights of its members, to shield and protect them and other Freethinkers, from unwarranted attack and unjust discrimination through religious bigotry and intolerance.

9. It shall also be the duty and privilege of this organization to strive for and demand the fullest possible freedom of thought, freedom of speech and freedom of the press, as against orthodox religious aggression and oppression, that shall be consistent with honor and morality and to the extent that the funds of the organization may permit such to be done.

Believing that a full, complete, and practical promulgation of the principles of this organization will subserve the best and highest interests of the race, tending to social improvement and progress and a resultant human happiness, we cordially invite all persons who agree with the principles herein expressed, and who approve the methods of propaganda herein set out, to unite and co-operate with the members of this organization for the dissemination of its principles.

#### GENERAL PROVISION.

This Association declares for and adopts the general principles in the government of this Association of the initiative, referendum and recall.

Whenever five per cent of the membership in good standing, as based upon the membership shown by the report of the Secretary on the first day of the calendar year, shall propose in writing the recall of any officer, or the adoption of any law or principle, or policy, or shall ask that any action of the directors or officers shall be submitted to referendum, then the Secretary shall proceed to submit the matter proposed to each member, by mail, within thirty days from the receipt of the said petition; and the Secretary shall report the vote on or before the end of one month after the date of submission. In case the Secretary neglect, or refuse, to act upon such petition, then the President shall take action thereon.

#### BY-LAWS.

1. This Organization shall meet in convention once each year at such times and places as the Board of Directors may determine.

2. The time and place of holding the annual convention shall be made known and published sixty days in advance of the same.

3. The Board of Directors shall meet as often as the business interests of the organization may demand, and their traveling and hotel expenses, while attending the same, shall be paid out of the funds of the organization, but they shall receive no other compensation.

4. The time and places of meeting of the Board of Directors shall be at the direction of the President, and the President shall at all times specify the same with a view to expediency and necessity.

5. The cost and expense of the management of this organization shall be paid only out of the general fund.

6. The cost of maintaining and supporting lecturers and distributing literature shall be paid only out of the Propaganda Fund.

7. The General Fund shall never be permitted to draw upon

or borrow from the Propaganda Fund.

8. If, at the end of any term, there shall be any money left in the General Fund, it may thereafter be transferred to the Propaganda Fund, but no money in the Propaganda Fund shall ever be transferred to the General Fund.

9. The President and Board of Directors shall be required to see that the laws governing and regulating the General and Propaganda Funds be strictly carried out.

10. The Board of Directors shall, from time to time, authorize the purchase and supply of the necessary books of record, papers and stationery to be used by the officers in the proper transaction of their respective duties.

11. A majority of the Board of Directors, at any meeting, shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business.

12. Twenty-five members of this organization, in good standing, at any annual convention, shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of its business.

13. No person shall be authorized to lecture for, in the name of, or under the auspices of this organization, without first having secured a certificate or commission therefor from the Board of Directors.

14. Any member of this society, in good standing, may offer a resolution amendatory of this Constitution and By-Laws, at any annual convention, by first submitting the same, in writing, to the Secretary of this organization, at least sixty days preceding such annual convention. No other resolution amendatory hereof shall be considered and acted upon at any convention except by the unanimous consent of the members attending the convention.

15. These By-Laws and Constitution shall never be amended, altered, changed, or suspended, except by a two-thirds majority vote of all the members attending the annual convention whereat such amendment is proposed.

16. The order of business at each annual convention shall be prepared and published not less than thirty days preceding the date of holding said convention in all Freethought Journals in America willing to publish the same.

17. To be entitled to vote at any annual convention members must be in good standing with the organization and not in arrears for dues thereto.

18. The procedure and debates at any annual convention of this organization shall be governed by Cushing's Manual.

HELEN M. LUCAS,

J. ATWOOD CULBERTSON,

MISS LIZZIE WILEY,

E. G. NICHOLS,

Committee.

Approved and adopted by the Freethinkers of American, in National Convention assembled, in the City of St. Louis, State of Missouri, on Sunday, November 14, 1909.

JOHN R. CHARLESWORTH,

Attest:

DAVID W. SANDERS,  
Secretary.

# The Rationalist Association of America

FULL REPORT OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE CONVENTION OF FREETHINKERS, HELD AT ST. LOUIS, SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 14th, 1909.

With fifty delegates, or more, in attendance, constituting themselves members of the convention, the proposition submitted by the Blade, endorsed by many Freethinkers, that a national organization be effected, has borne a ripe fruitage, and American Freethinkers have now an organization to which they can point with pride, look to with hope, and rely upon for a systematic advocacy of the principles promulgated.

Some of the delegates and members began to reach St. Louis by an early hour Saturday morning. Before noon they began to arrive from all directions and calls were made at the Laclede Hotel for this and that person attending, so that it was early made manifest that the convention was to be a success. From as far east as Pennsylvania, and as far west as Arkansas and Kansas, Freethinkers flocked to St. Louis to participate in the work contemplated, and share in the great glories of the occasion. Men and women had gathered from far and near to formulate and adopt a set of Freethought principles upon which all could consistently unite in an effort at propaganda.

As a full and itemized report of the convention is given, that report contains only the actual work accomplished. It would require several pages to give even an outline of the intense struggle precipitated by the St. Louis Socialists to engraft upon the organic law some provisions for the advocacy and recognition of economic reform as paramount to religious reform; and the advocates of other isms, not related to Freethought, were equally as vigorous in their discussions to the same end, but not quite so numerous. By reason of these debates, the afternoon session was prolonged from 2 o'clock until 7:30. Innumerable votes were taken with the result that the Freethinkers triumphed in the preservation of their principles and the Association was formed upon strictly Freethought lines. In one instance only did the Socialistic element gain a concession, which was in the adoption of a provision for the initiative, referendum and recall, which will be found in the constitution.

During these debates the convention bordered upon almost chaos. For a brief period of time the Chairman allowed the Socialists free rein to give vent to their ideas, and when they had about exhausted themselves, Dr. Morrison was called to the chair, and Mr. Charlesworth, as the chairman of the convention, took the floor and by reference to the provisions of the official call and an argument against the injection of isms foreign to the purpose of the convention, swung the convention to the side of Freethought, and from that moment the Socialists were *hors du combat*.

Many still sought to prolong the discussion. The Chairman rapped for order. There being no motion pending, it was ruled that no further discussion would be permitted upon the subject, and the convention was brought back to its original and only purpose, which resulted in the adoption of its constitution and the election of its officers.

The St. Louis papers gave extended notices of the proceedings of the convention. With but one exception, that of the Globe-Democrat, there was not the slightest effort at misrepresentation or exaggeration. The paper referred to, in its Monday morning issue, gave an exaggerated account of what took place, but each of the other papers treated the convention with respectful consideration, and published an impartial report.

Both upon his election and the manner in which he had held the Association to Freethought against those who had combined and inspired to lead it astray, President Charlesworth was made the recipient of numerous congratulations, and as the convention closed three cheers were given in his honor.

The proceedings are here given in full, as follows:

## PRELIMINARY CAUCUS.

The proceedings of the Convention opened with the Caucus held in the parlors of the Laclede Hotel at 8:00 o'clock Saturday night. There were about forty members present.

The Caucus was called to order by Mr. John R. Charlesworth, who briefly outlined the objects and purposes of the Caucus and the work it would be required to perform.

Upon motion, Mr. Charlesworth was elected temporary Chairman, and J. Atwood Culbertson, of Pittsburg, Pa., temporary Secretary.

The following Committees were then appointed:

Order of Business—H. P. Bischoff, Collinsville, Ill.; Albert P. Johnson, Vincennes, Ind.

Organization—Geo. M. Jackson, Pigott, Arkansas; Frank Vuch, St. Louis, Mo.; W. C. Daly, Princeton, Ind.

Constitution and By-Laws—Helen M. Lucas, Marietta, Ohio; Miss L. Wiley, Sulphur Springs, Mo.; J. Atwood Culbertson, Pittsburg, Pa.; E. G. Nichols, Norge, Va.

Nominations—M. Rowe, Paris, Ill.; Dr. Lindsey Morrison, West Point, Ky.; A. J. Cejka, St. Louis, Mo.

Finance—M. R. Coffman, Paragould, Ark.; Geo. Munz, Louisville, Ky.; C. W. Rudisill, Jacksonville, Ill.

Banquet—David Kohn, St. Louis, Mo.; W. C. Cope, St. Louis, Mo.

The temporary Chairman requested the several Committees to consider the matters submitted to them and to prepare their report for submission to the Convention as early as possible.



There being no further business, the Caucus adjourned to meet in convention at nine o'clock Sunday morning.

### CONVENTION.

The Convention was called to order by the temporary Chairman in Bowman's Hall at the corner of Eleventh and Locust Streets, at the hour designated in the call. As a number of the Committees were still at work in the preparation of their reports, a slight delay was experienced in the transaction of the business.

### ORDER OF BUSINESS.

The Committee on Order of Business to be transacted by the Convention submitted the following report:

1. Call to order by temporary Chairman.
2. Report of Committee on Order of Business.
3. Address of Welcome.
4. Response to Address of Welcome.
5. Statement of purposes and objects of Convention by temporary Chairman.
6. Report of Committee on Credentials.
7. Report of Committee on Organization.
8. Report of Committee on Constitution and By-Laws.
9. Report of Committee on Nominations.
10. Election of Officers.
11. Report of Committee on Finance.
12. Report of Committee on Resolutions.
13. Congratulatory addresses by members.
14. Closing address by President.
15. Adjournment.

### ADDRESS OF WELCOME.

The following address of welcome to the members of the Convention was next delivered by W. C. Cope, Editor of The Wheel of Life, of St. Louis, Mo.

#### Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen:—

The most cheerful word that ever falls from human lips when it comes spontaneously from the human heart is the little word—Welcome.

From the nature of the case, the life of the Freethinker must be a militant one. Nearly all of the time he is in the enemy's country. Often in his own home and among his own people this is the case. Sometimes even the wife of his bosom teaches his own children to regard him as an enemy of society.

So it is a pleasant thing when Freethinkers, men and women, are able to get away from the daily environment, oftentimes of hatred, nearly always one of suspicion, and come together in weekly meeting or annual convention, mingling with those of like thought and ideals with themselves.

Welcome means WELL-COME. It is well that we have come here to form a National Organization for many reasons:

First—It is well that we have come because of the strength that numbers give. Benjamin Franklin said to the signers of the Declaration of Independence, "If we don't hang together, we will all hang separately." This is eminently true of those in the Liberal movement. The forces of re-action and special

privilege are combining in a closer and more compact organization all the time. If the best way to fight the devil, whom we used to hear so much about, is with fire, the best way to fight an organization opposed to liberty is by a compact National Organization of Liberals. "Get together" is the watchword all along the line. This is the only hope, not only for our own country, but for the progress of mankind.

The Freethinker's ideals are those which must dominate the world if the evolutionary process is to continue and the world to make progress.

What are some of these ideals? You know them well; but it is a good thing to have them repeated.

(1) First, and including all the others, the ideal of Free Thought is that of free and untrammelled thought on all subjects—Religious, Philosophical, Sociological and Historical. Experimentation and verification is the law of Inductive Science, and is the Freethinker's Ideal. Paul did not follow his own advice when he said: "Prove all things; hold to that which is good." This is what Freethinkers are doing—testing, trying, questioning, investigating; throwing down an error here, finding a grain of truth there; but retaining throughout the ideal of free and untrammelled quest of truth, no matter where the trail leads. Let it lead to the icy peaks of isolation or the torrid climes of intolerance and hatred of our kind, the ideal leads us onward, and we follow whithersoever it leads.

There is no hypnotic influence in an ideal, whatever that ideal may be. An ideal is only an idea which has been suggested to us, either from within or without, with such force that it has become a fixed state of mind.

This has been understood by the church for a long time. As McIver-Tyndall says, "Our observation and experience convince us that there would be no time left to do anything useful, if the teaching of the church were strictly obeyed. The builders of the system were too well versed in the essentials of hypnotism to neglect any opportunity for chaining and holding the attention of its victims."

This is why the church lays such stress upon teaching religion in the schools. It wishes to hypnotize the child with the religious ideal while the mind is easily susceptible to such impressions. The hypnotic state is an unreasoning state, and it is very hard to arouse the person so hypnotised. His mind becomes closed to the reasoning process upon the subject upon which he has been hypnotised. The church knows this, and it is time for Freethinkers to find it out. Let the Freethinking Ideal of free and untrammelled investigation of all subjects be impressed upon the childish mind while it is yet in the impressionable state. If this were done on a large scale among all the nation's children, it is hard to realize to what discoveries it would lead and what an accumulation would be added to the world's stock of truth.

The Convention has not met, however, for much speech-making. I am here to welcome you on my own behalf as a Freethinker who is glad to be among his brethren.

I welcome you on behalf of the City of St. Louis. Its citizens will one day note with pride in the histories written of its progress that it was here, in this City of St. Louis, that the National Organization of Freethinkers was started.

I welcome you on behalf of our country. You are its salt, and the influence you radiate will be its salvation from all that tends to enfeeble, degrade and enslave in governmental policies.

I welcome you as a citizen of the world. In the words of the immortal Thomas Paine, "The world is my country; to do good is my religion." Such are Freethinkers everywhere, "from Greenland's icy mountains to India's coral strand." Where they meet is the spirit of liberty, fraternity, equality. At bottom, their ideal is the ideal of real democracy and brotherhood. May such as these live long and multiply the world!

The response to the Address of Welcome was made by Mr. D. W. Sanders, of Covington, Ind., who in a few well pointed remarks explanatory of the principles of Free thought, accepted the welcome extended in the name of the Convention and in behalf of the Freethinkers generally. Both the welcoming address and the response sounded the keynote of the Convention and the sentiments uttered therein were liberally applauded.

#### REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON ORGANIZATION.

Upon the suggestion of the Chairman that the Convention should resolve itself into a national organization, such action was taken upon the report of this Committee, which upon motion was adopted as follows:

##### Your Committee Reports the Following:—

Firmly believing that both the day and the hour are propitious and favorable for effecting an association of the individual elements of Freethought in the United States of America, welding them into a compact organization for the purpose of enhancing a better and more systematic propaganda of Freethought principles, and recognizing a constantly widening breach between the institutions of the orthodox church and the educational factors in progress and civilization, and believing that moral virtue and human happiness can be better subserved by the promulgation of scientific and philosophical methods based upon human considerations alone, than by conformity to religious creeds and the orthodox confessions of faith, therefore, in response to the demands made by individual Freethinkers throughout the United States, in writing expressed, we recommend that this convention resolve itself into a national organization under such definite name and to undertake such propaganda as shall be hereafter provided by the constitution and by-laws to be adopted by this convention.

We recommend, as a practical means of organization, that the officers shall consist of a president, a first and second vice-president, and a secretary-treasurer, to be the same officer; the said officers to be elected by ballot, and when so elected, the whole to constitute a Board of Directors, who shall, by a majority vote, cast in person, assist the officers in the performance of their duties, and shall, when the convention is not in session, manage and direct the business affairs and propaganda of the organization.

We also recommend that a list of honorary vice-presidents be elected at each annual, or other convention, at the ratio of one vice-president to each state and territory of the United States, who shall agree to aid in the work and disseminate the principles and policies of the organization within the jurisdiction of their respective states and territories.

We also recommend that all persons, without regard to race, color, or sex, who shall, in writing, signify their agreement with and acceptance of the principles, purposes and objects of this organization, and who shall be willing to aid in its propaganda, shall be eligible for membership.

We also recommend that all Freethinkers now in attendance upon this convention, and all Freethinkers who have expressed themselves as being in favor of this organization, who shall accept its principles and agree with its objects and purposes, and all Freethinkers making application for membership within sixty days after the adjournment of this convention, shall be deemed charter members of this organization and shall be enrolled as such upon its books.

We also recommend that this organization shall be and remain purely and distinctively national in character, but shall, through

its Board of Directors, foster, encourage, and assist in the formation and maintenance of State organizations under its auspices, for the purpose of affording a more efficient and systematic propaganda of its principles, issuing charters therefor and thereto, properly signed and sealed in such manner as the constitution and by-laws may provide, and that such State organizations shall be likewise assisted and encouraged in the organization of local bodies to be under State auspices and State control.

With full and implicit confidence in the wisdom of the plan outlined in this report, we respectfully submit the same and recommend that it be adopted.

GEO. M. JACKSON,  
FRANK VUCH,  
W. C. DALY.

The Chairman then briefly stated the object and purpose of the Convention as outlined in the official call, expressing a solicitude that in its organic law there should be no departure from the principles of Freethought, and that the organization should not be burdened by the side issues of political economy and other isms which have proven disastrous to Freethought advocacy in the past.

He expressed the hope that the organization, when effected, would maintain a purely Freethought attitude and reserve as its propaganda such policies as are distinctively anti-orthodox.

The following Committee on Resolutions was then appointed:

Parker H. Sercome, Chicago, Ill.

David W. Sanders, Covington, Indiana.

George M. Coffman, Paragould, Arkansas.

Upon the announcement that the other committees were not yet prepared to submit their reports, a few extemporaneous remarks were made upon the meaning of Freethought and the general scope of the term, in which several members indulged, when upon the motion of Dr. Lindsey Morrison, the Convention took a recess for lunch until 2:00 p. m.

As the Convention was about to recess, Miss Princess O. Jones, of East Lynne, Mo., took the floor and delivered to the Convention the greetings and good wishes of Dr. John Emerson Roberts, of Kansas City, which were received with enthusiasm.

#### AFTERNOON SESSION.

Convention called to order at 2:20 p. m. Minutes of morning session read and approved. The Committee on Constitution and By-Laws submitted its report, which after a session lasting more than five hours, resulted in the adoption of the following. Several amendments were sought to be made as each section was being considered, and being put to a vote, the following was finally adopted:

(The Constitution and By-Laws, as adopted, are printed elsewhere.)

#### ELECTION OF OFFICERS.

With the adoption of the Constitution and By-Laws designating the number of and providing for the election of



honorary and active officers, the Committee on Nominations reported the following:

For President—John R. Charlesworth, Lexington, Ky.  
For Vice-President—W. H. Maple, Chicago, Ill.  
For Second Vice-President—Dr. J. B. Wilson, Cincinnati, Ohio.  
For Secretary-Treasurer—David W. Sanders, Covington, Indiana.

Upon motion of George M. Jackson, of Pigott, Ark., duly carried, the temporary Secretary was instructed to cast one ballot as a whole for the Convention for the persons nominated in the report for the several offices. The Secretary having cast the ballot, the foregoing were declared to be elected as the acting officers of the Association amid enthusiasm.

Upon motion, the following were elected as the Honorary Vice-Presidents for each State and Territory named therein:

#### HONORARY VICE-PRESIDENTS.

##### Suggestions for benefit of Nominating Committee;

1. Alabama—Jacob Friedman, Birmingham, 1514 7th Ave., N.
2. Alaska—Helen Scott, Circle.
3. Arizona—S. J. Garrett, Tucson.
4. Arkansas—M. R. Coffman, Paragould.
5. California—Singleton W. Davis, Los Angeles.
6. Colorado—George Leeson, Cedaredge.
7. Connecticut—A. B. Bennett, South Norwalk.
8. Delaware—John H. McCloud, Wilmington, 2010 Market St.
9. Florida—Dr. J. M. Frost, Tampa, 510 Emeline Ave.
10. Georgia—C. F. W. Gunther, Gainesville.
11. Idaho—F. P. Ball, Sr., Caldwell, 503 Cleveland Boulevard.
12. Illinois—J. H. Schwartz, Marshall.
13. Indiana—Dr. T. J. Bowles, Muncie.
14. Iowa—Prof. A. J. Clausen, St. Ansgar.
15. Kansas—Henry C. Roberts, Bennington.
16. Kentucky—Dr. Lindsey Morrison, West Point.
17. Louisiana—Mrs. Hazel Putman, Wilburton.
18. Maine—Manly A. Brigham, Rumford Falls.
19. Maryland—John F. Clarke, Arlington.
20. Massachusetts—Dan Crosby, Osterville.
21. Michigan—F. B. Hall, Augusta.
22. Minnesota—George Wheelock, St. Charles.
23. Mississippi—Dr. E. B. Robbins, Vicksburg.
24. Missouri—Dr. Emil Simon, St. Louis.
25. Montana—Charles Wegner, Great Falls, Box 122.
26. Nebraska—J. W. Gilbert, Friend.
27. Nevada—
28. New Hampshire—John P. Thorndyke, Canaan, R. F. D.
29. New Jersey—N. Berne, Newark, 11 Gouverneur St.
30. New Mexico—A. A. Burdette, Silver City.
31. New York—C. R. Woodward, Lockport.
32. North Carolina—Leger Meyer, Wilmington.
33. North Dakota—R. Anderson, Cooperstown.
34. Ohio—Dr. J. B. Wilson, Cincinnati, 206 E. Fourth St.
35. Oklahoma—N. B. Grayson, Oscar.
36. Oregon—Mrs. Lula Gibson Herr, Heppner.
37. Pennsylvania—J. Atwood Culbertson, Pittsburg, 1013 Penn Avenue.
38. Rhode Island—Henry Pickering, Woonsocket.
39. South Carolina—Glenn D. Peake, Union Gibbs Co.

40. South Dakota—I. M. Macomber, Lennox.
41. Tennessee—Arthur Stone, Chattanooga, 2 1-2 Main St.
42. Texas—J. D. Shaw, Waco.
43. Utah—Joseph Rogers, Salt Lake City, 247 S. Main St.
44. Vermont—E. A. Fitch, Wilmington.
45. Washington—H. T. Ahrens, Spokane, 614 Sinto St.
47. West Virginia—J. C. Watkins, Kanawha Falls.
48. Wisconsin—J. W. Krusehke, Cranberry Center.
49. Wyoming—I. W. Beckwith, Lander.

The Finance Committee reported that it had received sufficient funds to pay the expenses of the Convention, which had been discharged in full, and that a balance was left to be turned over to the Treasurer, which was done.

The Committee on Resolutions reported the following, which were adopted:

#### THE RESOLUTIONS AS ADOPTED.

RESOLVED, That Freethought, free speech and free press and a constant seeking after truth conduce to the highest civilization, peace and good will. As orthodoxy is opposed to all these, we in turn are opposed to orthodoxy in all its forms.

We denounce the governmental murder of the Freethinker and modern educator, Professor Francisco Ferrer, of Spain, which murder was instigated by the fanatical clergy as a part of their campaign to oppose all intellectual progress and the cause of freedom from church domination. We cherish the hope that Ferrer's death may be the last great sacrifice to satisfy the demand of priestcraft, and that his name may be accorded a place among the world's brave martyrs.

The Constitution of the United States makes our government strictly secular in that no religious test shall be made for citizenship or for holding public office. Therefore, all legislation demanded by the church and clergy in the interest of religion is contrary to the spirit of the Constitution.

The placing on our coins of the motto, "In God We Trust," is an attempt to have this government officially recognize the existence of a personal god—which many of the best citizens of this republic regard as much a myth as the clergy regards the old Greek and Roman gods.

All church property should be taxed according to its actual physical valuation.

We are opposed to the reading of the Bible in the public schools as a book of authority above ordinary fairy stories, or the singing of religious songs or to have any devotional exercises in any schools supported by public taxation.

The Convention adjourned *sine die*.

#### THE BANQUET.

The Convention had been in session from 2:00 o'clock in the afternoon to 7:30 p. m. Upon adjournment, the members repaired to the Little Hungarian Restaurant at Broadway and Locust Streets, and sat at a Banquet prepared for them. During the evening while seated around the festal board, several short speeches were made, in which Parker H. Sercombe, David W. Sanders, Mrs. Helen M. Lucas, J. Atwood Culbertson, David Kohn, Dr. Lindsey

Morrison, and Miss L. Wiley took part, congratulating those present upon the work of the Convention. The proceedings were brought to a close by a short address from President Charlesworth, in which he outlined his plans for the coming year's work. He made a strong plea for unity and harmony in the ranks of American Freethinkers, and stated that if the officers of the Rationalist Association of America could but receive the support of the Freethinkers their reports at the next annual convention would be able to show a volume of work reflecting credit upon the Association and its membership. The President stated that these plans would be given later in the form of a circular address to Freethinkers.

During the Convention proceedings, Mr. Sheridan Webster, of St. Louis, in behalf of and at the request of E. G. Nichols, of Norge, Va., handed to the President-elect a jewel in the form of a watch fob, containing a silver globe, upon which is inscribed the motto of Thomas Paine: "*The world is my country; to do good my religion.*" This trophy is to be held in trust by the President of the Association and handed to his successor.

With three rousing cheers for the officers of the Association, the Banquet and Convention came to an end.

#### NOTES OF MY LECTURE TRIP.

When writing of my experiences on the Freethought lecture platform in Ohio during two recent trips through that State, and the vastly improved conditions that prevailed, the growing Liberalism among the people, and the increasing popularity of our principles, the thought came to me after I had written them, that such conditions might be confined, in a large measure, to the Buckeye State, and that in other States, among another and different people, I might not experience such flattering prospects. Only a practical test could determine with any degree of satisfaction whether or not the principles of Freethought were as acceptable in one community as another; that is, in communities remotely situated from each other and not influenced by similar environment. These lectures which were given on my way to the St. Louis Convention, have convinced me beyond all doubt that the church is losing ground everywhere. Not that the church is any worse than it used to be, but because the people are growing wiser and better. The masses are now beginning to feel that they are capable of conducting their own negotiations with the throne of grace and can dispense with the services of the middle-men. The masses now feel that they can map out their own route to the new Jerusalem and do not need the help of a theological surveyor. Thus, it is sufficiently manifest that the people of Indiana are not behind the people of Ohio and neighboring States in their acceptance of the new order of things. To one who has borne the brunt of many a hard fight in the old, pioneer days of a generation ago, the changed conditions are extremely noticeable and appreciable.

The people are now upon our side, in thought and heart and mind, but the influences of heredity and environment

are difficult of escape. The child encounters superstition in the cradle, and it follows him all through the uncertain path of his life to the grave. Many now calling themselves Freethinkers are not entirely devoid of its influences. Here and there traces of some form of superstition will be perceptible in the ordinary routine of daily labor or habit. With this we can far better appreciate the difficulty experienced in attempting to sever church connections, church influences, and church environment. Innumerable of life's traditions are closely interwoven therewith, and it is a struggle, the mental magnitude of which we must not underestimate in our propaganda work. The people are growing more liberal. Those who remain with the church will surely liberalize it. The more fearless will step down and out. Among the latter we may prosecute our work with a measure of sure reward, as the newly encountered experiences assuredly indicate.

Upon undertaking the present trip, I had two objects in view. These were to enable me to earn my way to St. Louis to attend the Convention and to work up an interest in the business of the Convention. I have succeeded in both. Leaving home on the afternoon of Sunday, Nov. 7th, I arrived in Cincinnati the same night and spent several hours in the company of Dr. J. B. Wilson, talking and discussing plans for future work. I regret to say that I found him somewhat indisposed, the result of a long-continued heavy mental strain argued by an attack of rheumatism, which placed him almost out of commission. He had not lost heart, however, and taking as his motto, "Physician, heal thyself," he had gone to work bent upon a recuperation, which, I am sure, our readers will heartily wish for him. Dr. Wilson expressed a wish to accompany me on my week's work in Indiana and Illinois, and at this writing I am in hopes that he will catch me at Marshall, Ill., where a rather warm time is expected.

Monday morning I boarded a Big Four train for Covington, Ind. I was down here for three lectures. A ride of six hours brought me to my destination. During this trip an amusing incident happened. One of our best and most enthusiastic Freethinkers in Indiana, a member of the old guard, Phillip Bruch, of New Ross, fifty miles east of Covington, boarded the train upon which I was riding, entered the same coach, and occupied a seat directly across the aisle from me, and not knowing each other, we continued the journey, without speaking. Had I been a little more observant, I could have detected the Wettstein badge he was wearing, and this would have been an enough without any formal introduction. Mr. Bruch had come to hear the lectures, however, and we made up for lost time.

We were met at the depot by D. W. Sanders, Secretary of the Indiana State Secular Association, and in a few minutes other Freethinkers had gathered. An informal love feast followed at the hotel. Later, Captain LaTourette drove in, and this being our first meeting, I found him a genial, big-hearted, open and generous supporter of our common cause. The afternoon was pleasantly spent, and after supper came the lectures.



For the lectures the Court-house had been secured. It is quite a commodious room and well apportioned for public speaking. Although we lost a few because of a slight misunderstanding as to the hour set for opening, yet there was a splendid audience for me to talk to. A conservative estimate would place the audience slightly in excess of one hundred, with about twenty ladies present. Two ministers were on hand. One, Rev. Thad. Hudson, pastor of the Campbellite church, occupied a front seat and took copious notes of what was said during my lecture, to be used in all probability after I had gone. The other was Mrs. Oliphant, a lady evangelist, of pleasing personality, who, in a personal conversation at the close of the lecture, I found to be exceedingly liberal in her views, and she frankly admitted that I was right in my arguments as far as I had gone, but suggested that I ought to have gone just a little farther and admitted God as a factor in human affairs. Of course, it was at this point we locked horns and agreed to disagree. Rev. William Ellwood, also of the Campbellite persuasion, was also in my first audience, but he had no opinion to express. It was extremely gratifying to me to know that I had succeeded in creating a favorable impression in the public mind concerning our views, and that my presentation had won many new friends for the cause. It was also a pleasure to meet so many Freethinkers, several travelling for miles to hear the lecture, even from Danville and other points in Illinois.

Some days before my arrival, D. W. Sanders, with whom the arrangements had been made for these lectures, addressed a personal letter to the preacher or priest of every local church, inviting them to be present, and to bring the open-minded members of their congregation with them. Except in the instances above named, none of them accepted. The local Catholic priest, a Father Schmidt, went even further. It was reported that he stated to his congregation, in his broken dialect: There's going to be some Infidel lectures in the Courthouse next week. Don't any of you stick your head inside those doors." Of course, we have no means of actually knowing, but it is a fair presumption that the order was obeyed under pain of excommunication. The Methodist church also gave us opposition. The Methodist dislikes controversy. Although, as I am informed, it is contrary to the custom of that church in this city to have any meeting on Monday night, yet one was arranged for this particular Monday in order to keep the faithful from hearing the other side. With both god and the bible on their side, they do not feel sufficiently armed to face an intellectual foe.

The second lecture produced even still better results. There was by far a much larger audience the increase showing on the side of the ladies, as well as the gentlemen. This time my subject was upon the Bible, its place in literature, and its influence upon morality. Another preacher was in my audience on this occasion, in addition to the others who had returned, and further notes were taken, which are to be used, as is presumed, after I am miles away from the scene. There was one peculiarity conspicuous and

noticeable. The people appeared to manifest varying emotions. At first they hardly knew how to take it. They appeared timid. Gradually, they began to take courage, and approved. So marked did this approbation become that at the close of my second lecture, a lady, Mrs. Kaufman, wife of the local station agent, came to the rostrum and handed me a bouquet of beautiful white chrysanthemums. I was both pleased and surprised at this demonstration. Twenty years ago when I first essayed to lecture on the Freethought platform, there were few ladies in the land who had courage enough to thus give a public appreciation of the lecturer. Now conditions have changed. The church has lost its power to browbeat and terrify. It is not that the church has grown any worse, but because the people have grown wiser and better. Of this I am thoroughly convinced. The actual contact with the people through this work on the platform, has given abundant demonstrations of its truth. We have every reason, then, to take courage and make preparations to reap that great harvest now almost ready to fall into our hands.

Just before the lecture began, I was informed that Dr. William Ellwood, the local Campbellite preacher, was to be present for the purpose of challenging me to a debate. Knowing the proclivities of the preachers of this denomination for "sputin", I was resolved not to permit these tactics to interfere with my lectures as they were arranged, but if a debate could be agreed upon, I would bargain to call at Covington after the St. Louis Convention and fill in a few days between my last lecture appointment, as arranged, and the Indianapolis Convention. But the challenge did not materialize. The reverend gentleman was present. We met and talked before the lecture began, and at its close not a word was said. As I am writing this, there is still another lecture to be given and the challenge may come. We shall see. For my own part I would welcome it, provided the subject be broad enough to expound, by comparison, the merits and demerits of the opposing systems.

At this point I wish to state to some of our readers, that at the time I left home to embark upon this trip, I noticed some letters on my desk which were forgotten in the hurry of departure. This correspondence must, therefore, remain unanswered until my return, and I trust our friends who had written me, expecting an answer, will accept this explanation for the seeming neglect or delay.

During Wednesday I had to begin preparations for departure, as my next appointment, at Marshall, Ill., the home of J. H. Schwartz, one of the Blade contributors, made it necessary that I should leave on the midnight train. As I have written elsewhere, I am looking for big doings at Marshall, which may be inferred from letters I have received from Bro. Schwartz. This can be better explained later on.

While in Covington I had the sincere pleasure of meeting with and enjoying the company of a number of Liberal men and women. Among them were D. W. Sanders, of whom I am deeply inspired with great hopes for future

work. Captain Schuyler La Tourette and his son Fred, the former having faced powder and ball for freedom of the black man and willing to face dynamite, if necessary, for the freedom of the white man; Capt. M. V. Allen, also a battle-scarred veteran, who gave one arm at the battle of Missionary Ridge in freedom's cause, and is willing to surrender the other arm, if necessary, to make mental freedom doubly sure; S. C. Kaufman and wife, both of Liberal heart and mold, a credit to the cause and an honor to the principles we advocate; Guy F. Spinning, who has recently been elected County Recorder, and the Mayor-elect, whose name I cannot recall, both of whom are not fearful of Liberal thought; also, Colonel J. L. Allen, a wealthy land owner, who, inclining toward Universalist ideas, was liberal enough and generous enough to give material aid to the lecture course, and attended them all; Charles K. Bright, a worthy and capable young school teacher; David S. Ferguson and wife, who enjoyed the first lecture so much that they came back and brought more with them to the others; Phillip Bruch, of New Ross, an old stand-by, and fearless in his stand for the cause; W. A. Berlin, an ex-minister, now a Freethinker, who came from Danville, Ill., to hear the lecture. There were many others who came forward to greet me and to thank me for the expressions given during the lectures, but I cannot remember the names. Thus, I can truthfully say, our cause is growing by leaps and bounds, and we can make the growth more rapid through the gentle art of cultivation, a course we must steadfastly pursue.

My third and last lecture was a fitting climax to all that had preceded. The audience was bigger and larger than ever. It was composed of the very best people in the community. Intelligence was depicted on every face. Both sexes had increased in number. The joy and beauty of the occasion was enhanced when, just as I arose to begin talking, Captain La Tourette entered the hall with a large bouquet of flowers, which he placed on the table directly in front of me. These were a present from his estimable wife, who had been prevented from attending on account of sickness. The lecture was well received. The audience seemed to thoroughly enjoy it. At its close, fully one-half of the audience came up to shake hands and congratulate me upon my work. All this bears witness to the truth of what I have said about the people having come over to our side.

Just as Bro. Sanders was about to close the meeting, Rev. Thad. Hudson, whom I have previously mentioned, arose and suggested a debate upon the subject of Jesus being the son of god, not with any local preacher, or even himself, but with some unknown person whom they, the preachers, would secure. Unwilling to submit to a leap in the dark, I declined their proposition, but Mr. Sanders and Rev. Hudson were named to enter into negotiations for persons and principles for a future debate.

My next letter will be from Marshall. I am more than pleased with the result of my labors in Covington. The Freethinkers expressed themselves as being delighted beyond

measure. This leaves a good feeling on all sides. It put both Freethinker and Christian on friendly terms. People of all phases of religious belief enjoyed the lectures and a distinct gain has been made for our side of the question.

It is now growing late in the night and I must bring this letter to a close. A few short hours of rest, and at 2:20 a. m., I board a train and leave for other fields of labor.

## SPOOKS IN THE CRUCIBLE

An Address Delivered at the Seventh Annual Convention of the  
Buckeye Secular Union, at Columbus, Ohio,  
September 12, 1909.

(By Otto Wettstein.)

"There is no ecclesiastical science, and there will be none, so long as the telescope does not locate regions where angels dwell."  
—Buechner.

"We are not here to inquire what we prefer, but what is truth."  
—Huxley.

Last year I presented to you a few well established facts in evidence that a God is not only impossible but also superfluous in the infinite economy of nature. If it was not your good fortune to listen to that eloquent (!) discourse, or if you doubt that I proved, what the world at large considers unprovable, you may, after we adjourn, procure a copy of "The Ax to the Root," from our secretary, and be convinced.

Having disposed of the great infinite spook I now propose to prove that the entire hosts of finite spooks—devils, witches, ghosts, souls and spirits are non-existent also.

When a college-bred young man was recommended for a place on the staff of "The New York Tribune" because of his mastery of grammar, bluff old Horace Greeley cut the matter short by exclaiming: "damn grammar! this office wants facts."

Taking for granted that a presentation of facts and not a desire for pulpit eloquence and spread-eagleism is what you are here for, I venture to address you to present facts, reason from facts and to prove from facts that such phantasmagoria as a supreme spook or individual spooks do not exist.

In our schools and churches everything is taught authoritatively. The scholar must accept everything taught as final and true. "Obedience" is the command. But the teacher or priest has also been so educated, and his teachers so before him; and so all teachers have been taught to teach what their teachers again in turn, may be centuries before, were taught to teach as infallible gospel.

If this is true it becomes self-evident that the higher education—though a precious acquisition in its practical branches, based upon knowledge and facts—may, on the other hand, entirely defeat the purpose of true education. A parrot-like training in the wisdom of the dark ages, or in the religion of our grandmothers, cannot possibly become a potent factor in modern civilization, on the contrary it tends to the perpetuation of error.

What the world most needs is new, bold and analytical thought, freely expressed and tolerated; and the right of the humblest to criticize the greatest scholar.

The most learned and wisest men have made lamentable mistakes and no authority is infallible. Confucius said: "Words ought not to be accepted because uttered by the lofty, nor rejected because uttered by the lowly." And I may add: or by a Jeweler.

The belief in immortality was born of the vain desire to attain in the future a degree of continuous happiness not possible here and now. If I could prove to the world (which I intend to do



in my next address) that eternal life is not worth living, this infantile hypothesis would be universally rejected.

Less than a half a century ago—within the memory of many now living—the belief in a literal hell and all the horrors it implies was yet almost universally associated in the minds of Christians with the more felicitous belief in a heaven and a God. Today, thanks to Ingersoll and Beecher, almost the entire intellectual world peremptorily rejects, if not Christianity entire, at least this grotesque and monstrous doctrine of eternal punishment for temporal sins. What are the causes of this sudden apostasy from a vital doctrine, which for eighteen hundred years has been held sacred, and which is so intimately associated with the scheme of Christianity? What causes led to this remarkable revolution of sentiment? Both doctrines are fundamental tenets of the Christians' faith, both are taught in the bible; both have same origin and same basis; why, then, have a vast majority of the more intellectual men and women complacently rejected the former belief while tenaciously clinging to the belief in a literal heaven and a life of eternal bliss?

To the analyst, who calmly searches for truth regardless of consequences and personal preferences, the answer is self-evident, viz.: because of the egotism and vanity of humanity. Men and women do not relish misery and pain, therefore, as soon as they have cast off the yoke of a tyrannical hierarchy they cheerfully reject a belief not to their liking. They enjoy the idea of prospective unalloyed bliss during eternity, therefore do not apply the rigid analysis to their favorite belief that they do to an obnoxious one, consequently cling to the belief of an Utopian existence in a literal heaven. An atmosphere of fire, and his Satanic Majesty armed with harpoon stirring up the flames, does not conform to their ideas of a comfortable abode during eternity, therefore they do not fail to see the absurdity of the myth and gladly reject the hideous nightmare. But mansions of ideal architecture in the sky, constructed of onyx-stone and alabaster, with pearly gates, in a city paved with gold, where milk and honey flows and where musical instruments, spotless robes and roasted pigeons are free to all, this suits their vanity, this they yearn for, this they demand (and the priest tells them God supplies every demand!) therefore they greedily endorse this promise of Christianity, pay for it cheerfully, and live and die by it.

But here a "higher critic" will protest and insist that there are other reasons why the doctrine of a hell is rejected; that science formulates that there is no such a place on the earth, in the earth, over or under the earth. Also that life could not exist in conditions unfavorable to life. A human being cast into a seething crematory oven would expire instantly. Combustion implies something to combust—to be consumed. This process as far as man is concerned would at most continue a few moments, then this only hell would be over and this man exist no more.

Very true, Mr. "higher critic," but now to be honest and consistent, you must apply same rationative processes to your heaven, God and spirit-life—the twin doctrines of the myth you reject—. There is no such a locality as the heaven you expect to go to, on the earth, in the earth, over or under the earth, nor within the realms of boundless expanse. Furthermore, if there were such "mansions in the skies" human life from this earth could never reach them.

Man is an organic structure, and decarnate souls or spirits—if there are such beings—must also be of organic form or, could not possibly resemble a human being, much less constitute a man, woman or child and all it implies. But organic forms are very frail things and dependent for their existence upon the favorable conditions of their environments. If in the course of time climatic conditions upon this planet, change but a hundred degrees either way, every vestige of human and animal

life would soon be exterminated. Now it so happens that the degree of fridity beyond our atmosphere is so intense that life could no more exist there, than it could in the opposite extreme or in a crematory oven in full blast. Therefore, it is plain that the journey to heaven—even if such a place were a fact—would be a physical impossibility.

Furthermore all cosmic bodies, like the earth, revolve on their axis, besides sweeping around the sun with lightning velocity. Mercury travels within its orbit at the rate of 2,454,500 miles per day and our earth at the rate of 1,260,000 miles in the same time. Think of it! And all other cosmic bodies are continually whirling and moving with similar incomprehensible speed. This, of course, would make it impossible for spirits—even if they could live beyond our atmosphere—to successfully make their exit from this world, reach another and survive. To jump off a railway train, speeding at the rate of a thousand miles an hour, on to another train moving at the same inconceivable speed in an opposite direction and survive, would be child's play in comparison to the feat of any living being attempting to jump from the periphery of this rotating flying planet, soar through fridity 1000 degrees below zero, then land upon another speeding and gyrating world and escape destruction. It cannot be done unless we posit miracle—a miraculous being and a miraculous journey—then all science and discussion ends.

Spiritists claim that spirits can reach distant worlds the same as thought can reach distant places. But science disproves this when it affirms that: "a thing cannot be said to move from one place to another unless it passes in succession through every intermediate place."

Prof. Le Seur, in a late Popular Science Monthly, says: "The doctrine of immortality has been accepted upon the same authority as that upon which the most preposterous fables have been given out as solid truth. That authority now is discredited, and among intelligent classes is becoming more so from day to day."

The mystery with which man's life and death has been invested can never be settled by personal preference, obscure metaphysics, morbid sentimentality or questionable authority; neither can we trust our priests, preachers, or mediums, to settle it for us. These are interested financially and otherwise to keep the matter enshrouded in mystery. As long as we are in the dark their services are an apparent necessity and our cash naturally flows freely into their coffers. This mystery removed their vocation and income is gone.

(To be continued)

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